

Office Action Summary**Application No.**

09/481,477

Applicant(s)

GELFER, GEORGE G.

Examiner

Naresh Vig

Art Unit

3629

Period for Reply -- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
 - If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
 - If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
 - Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 09 April 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7, 9-40 and 42 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7, 9-40 and 42 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Final Drawing Review (PTO-640)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____
- Paper No(s)/Mail Date 2.5.6

DETAILED ACTION

This is in reference to response received on 09 April 2004 to the office action mailed on 11 June 2002. There are 40 claims, claims 1 – 7, 9 – 40 and 42 pending for examination.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1 – 7, 9 – 40 and 42 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claims 1 – 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter.

The basis of this rejection is set forth in a two-prong test of:

- (1) whether the invention is within the technological arts; and
- (2) whether the invention produces a useful, concrete, and tangible result.

For a claimed invention to be statutory, the claimed invention must be within the technological arts. Mere ideas in the abstract (i.e., abstract idea, law of nature, natural phenomena) that do not apply, involve, use, or advance the technological arts fail to promote the "progress of science and the useful arts" (i.e., the physical sciences as opposed to social sciences, for example) and therefore are found to be non-statutory subject matter. For a process claim to pass muster, the recited process must somehow apply, involve, use, or advance the technological arts.

In the present case, claims 1 – 26 determining the supply consumed during operations and ordering the supplies which is consumed during operations only recites an abstract idea. The recited steps of merely monitoring the consumption of supplies, ordering the supplies upon reaching a threshold and filling the order does not apply, involve, use, or advance the technological arts since all of the recited steps can be performed in the mind of the user or by use of a pencil and paper. These steps only constitute an idea of how to select an insurance policy over another.

Additionally, for a claimed invention to be statutory, the claimed invention must produce a useful, concrete, and tangible result. In the present case, the claimed invention monitors consumption quantity of supply item (i.e., repeatable) used in ordering supplies upon reaching threshold (i.e., useful and tangible).

Although the recited process produces a useful, concrete, and tangible result, since the claimed invention, as a whole, is not within the technological arts as explained above, claim 1 is deemed to be directed to non-statutory subject matter.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1 – 5, 7, 9, 10, 13 – 18, 21 – 33 and 35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over LoBiondo et al. US Patent 5,305,199 hereinafter known as LoBiondo in view of Barnes et al. US Patent 5,970,475 hereinafter known as Barnes.

Regarding claims 1 and 27, LoBiondo teaches automatically ordering a supply item which is consumed during operation of a device (Automatic or semi-automatic ordering can be provided via a remote interactive communication system) [abstract]. LoBiondo teaches:

monitoring a consumption quantity associated with consumption of a supply item (e.g.ink) during operation of a device and repeatedly comparing said consumption quantity to a threshold representing consumption of said supply item before complete depletion of said supply item [Fig. 7, col. 2, lines 54 – 59];

upon said consumption quantity reaching said threshold, establishing a communication between said device and a data center remote from said device, and automatically generating and communicating an ordering message representing an order for said supply item, and including an identification code in said ordering message [col. 5, lines 5 – 7];

LoBiondo does not teach

identifying, based on said identification code, an entity which has placed said ordering message. However, Barnes teaches identifying, based on said identification code, an entity which has placed said ordering message [col. 3, lines 2 – 54];

compiling a data bank containing respective identification codes for a plurality of different ordering entities, each ordering entity having at least one permissible supply item associated therewith, However Barnes teaches compiling a data bank containing respective identification codes for a plurality of different ordering entities, each ordering entity having at least one permissible supply item associated therewith [col. 1, lines 9 – 13]; and

upon receipt of said ordering message at said data center, conducting an ordering routine at said data center including searching said data bank to find the ordering entity associated with the identification code in the ordering message and filling said order only with a supply item conforming to said at least one permissible supply item, However, Barnes teaches upon receipt of said ordering message at said data center, conducting an ordering routine at said data center including searching said data bank to find the ordering entity associated with the identification code in the ordering

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message and filling said order only with a supply item conforming to said at least one permissible supply item [col. 4, lines 21 – 26].

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify LoBiondo as taught by Barnes to prevent abuses from within the organization.

Regarding claims 2 and 28, LoBiondo teaches selecting said predetermined consumption quantity from the group consisting of a time quantity, a physical quantity, a monetary quantity and an accounting quantity, dependent on said supply item [col. 4, lines 29 – 39].

Regarding claims 3 and 29, LoBiondo teaches consumption quantity is an item count and wherein the step of monitoring said predetermined consumption quantity and repeatedly comparing said consumption quantity to a threshold comprises incrementing said item count as said supply item is consumed, and comparing said item count to a predetermined counter reading as said threshold (determine inventory on hand). LoBiondo teaches to determine inventory on hand [col. 4, lines 1 – 4].

Regarding claim 4, LoBiondo teaches device comprises a printing device (reprographic machine such a inkjet printer, business choice to elect what type of printer to use e.g. impact printer, dot matrix, laser, inkjet) and wherein said supply item comprises an inking ribbon cassette (ink for inkjet printer, toner for laser printer, ribbon for dot matrix printer etc.) used during printing in said device [col. 2, lines 11 – 24], and wherein the step of incrementing said item count comprises incrementing said item count upon each imprint which is made on said inking ribbon cassette, and wherein said predetermined counter reading comprises a number of said imprints which is less than a total number of imprints accommodated by said inking ribbon cassette (design choice whether the ribbon in one time use only (IBM typewriter had this kind of ribbon, or, use the ribbon until the ink fades like in Epson dot matrix printers) [col. 4, lines 1 – 4].

Regarding claim 5, LoBiondo teaches device is a printer device and wherein said supply item comprises ink contained in an ink tank cassette which is used during printing and wherein said item count comprises an amount of said ink from said ink tank which is consumed during each imprint produced by said printer device, and wherein said predetermined counter reading is an ink volume, represented by a plurality of said imprints, which is less than a total volume of ink in said ink tank cassette [col. 4, lines 1 – 4].

Regarding claim 7, LoBiondo teaches monitoring a predetermined consumption quantity and repeatedly comparing said predetermined consumption quantity to a threshold comprises monitoring a plurality of different consumption quantities associated with said supply item and repeatedly comparing each of said plurality of predetermined consumption quantities to respective thresholds which are respectively reached before complete depletion of said supply item cassette [col. 4, lines 1 – 4].

Regarding claim 9, LoBiondo in view of Barnes teaches an order number in said ordering message, and triggering said ordering routine at said data center dependent on said ordering number [Barnes, abstract].

Regarding claim 10, LoBiondo in view of Barnes teaches selecting said ordering number from the group consisting of order codes for respectively different supply items and identification numbers for respectively different supply items.

Regarding claims 13 – 16, defining what kind of data is included with the order number, this is considered to be non-functional descriptive material that does not distinguish (define) over the applied prior art. Since the instant claims places an order for replenishing supplies, the type of data claimed is considered to be non-functional

descriptive material, the applied prior art satisfies the claim. The prior art places an order for replenishing supplies and is fully capable of including identification number, serial number, type of supply item and ordered amount, this is the extend to which weight will be given to the claimed data. When descriptive material is not functionally related to the article, the descriptive material will not distinguish the invention from the prior art in terms of patentability, *In re Gulack*, 217 USPQ 401 (CAFC 1983).

Regarding claim 17, LoBiondo in view of Barnes does not teach including a checksum in said ordering message. However, Official notice is taken that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made that in an online communication using modem, checksum is used with the data transmission to ensure that the data received over the transmission line is not corrupted.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify LoBiondo in view of Barnes and include checksum to maintain data integrity.

Regarding claims 18 and 31, LoBiondo in view of Barnes teaches . A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising encrypting said ordering message.

Regarding claim 21, LoBiondo teaches generating a confirmation message at said data center when said order is filled, and transmitting said confirmation message from said data center to said device (Order confirmation can be provided from the reorder site.) [abstract].

Regarding claim 22, LoBiondo in view of Barnes teaches generating an invoice addressed to said ordering entity at said data center upon filling said order, and transmitting said invoice to said ordering entity [Barnes col. 8, lines 38 – 39].

Regarding claim 23, LoBiondo in view of Barnes teaches ordering entity maintains an account accessible by said data center, and comprising the additional step of automatically debiting said account at said data center dependent on a price of said supply item upon filling said order [Barnes, Gig. 6A label 88].

Regarding claim 24, LoBiondo teaches automatically generating said ordering message and establishing said communication from said device to said data center in a routine for automatic ordering, and allowing a user of said device to selectively disable said routine for automatic ordering (automatic or semi-automatic ordering can be provided via a remote interactive communication system) [abstract].

Regarding claim 25, LoBiondo teaches conducting an interrogation routine in said device upon initialization of said device and, within said interrogation routine, allowing for a user input into said device to selectively enable or disable said routine for automatic ordering (automatic or semi-automatic ordering can be provided via a remote interactive communication system) [abstract].

Regarding claim 26, LoBiondo teaches generating said ordering message and establishing said communication from said device to said data center are conducted in a routine for automatic ordering, and allowing remote disabling of said routine for automatic ordering by remote switching from said data center in a communication from said data center to said device (automatic or semi-automatic ordering can be provided via a remote interactive communication system) [abstract].

Regarding claim 30, LoBiondo teaches device comprises an input unit for entering said threshold into said control unit, said input unit being selected from the group consisting of a keyboard connected to said control unit, a chip card and chip card reader connected to said control unit, and a modem connected to said control unit and communicable with said remote data center [abstract, Fig. 1].

Regarding claim 32, LoBiondo teaches a display connected to said control unit and an input unit connected to said control unit, said control unit displaying said ordering message on said display before transmitting said ordering message to said remote data center, and said input unit allowing a user to modify said ordering message [abstract, Fig. 1].

Regarding claim 33, LoBiondo teaches keyboard allows suppression of said ordering message so that no ordering message is communicated to said remote data center [abstract].

Regarding claim 35, LoBiondo in view of Barnes does not teach printer is a thermal printer and wherein said ink source is a thermal inking ribbon. However, Official notice it taken that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made that it is a business choice to decide what printer to use.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify LoBiondo in view of Barnes and use thermal printer to eliminate the replenishment of ink. For example, computer terminals Texas Instruments Silent Writer with thermal printer.

Claims 6, 34, 36, 39 and 40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over LoBiondo et al. US Patent 5,305,199 hereinafter known as LoBiondo in view of Barnes et al. US Patent 5,970,475 hereinafter known as Barnes and further in view of Coudray et al. US Patent 6,325,477 hereinafter known as Coudray.

Regarding claims 6, 34 and 36, LoBiondo in view of Barnes does not teach device is a printer device and wherein said supply item is ink contained in an ink tank cassette which is used for printing by said printer device, and wherein the step of monitoring said predetermined consumption quantity and repeatedly comparing said consumption quantity to a threshold comprised disposing electrodes in said ink tank cassette and monitoring a current between said electrodes to identify when said ink in said ink tank cassette falls below a predetermined level, said predetermined level comprising said threshold (monitor ink level in ink tank). However, Coudray teaches a device and a method for determining the quantity of product present in a reservoir [abstract]. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify LoBiondo in view of Barnes as taught by Coudray to be able to warn the operator that it is time to change the ink cartridge.

Regarding claim 39, LoBiondo in view of Barnes and Coudray teaches ink tank cassette containing ink therein at an ink level which changes dependent on the number of imprints made by said ink jet printer, and wherein said means for monitoring consumption comprises a sensor which identifies said ink level and wherein said control unit calculates a number of remaining imprints when said ink level, as sensed by said sensor, reaches a predetermined level.

Regarding claim 40, LoBiondo in view of Barnes and Coudray teaches sensor comprises electrodes which interact with said ink in said ink tank cassette which supply a signal to said control unit, and further comprising an input unit connected to said control unit allowing input of characteristic information about said ink, and wherein said control unit calculates said number of remaining imprints dependent on said signal from said electrodes and said characteristic information about said ink. Official notice it taken that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made that it is a design choice to elect what information is derived from the amount of ink available for consumption. For example, business are known to calculate the projection based upon the availability or resources.

Claims 11, 12, 19, 20, 37, 38 and 42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over LoBiondo et al. US Patent 5,305,199 hereinafter known as LoBiondo in view of Barnes et al. US Patent 5,970,475 hereinafter known as Barnes and Canon Multipass C5500 hereinafter known as Canon.

Regarding claim 11, LoBiondo in view of Barnes does not teach physically attaching an indicator representing said ordering number to said supply item. However, Canon teaches attaching a indicator representing ordering number to supply item [Canon page 1-9, 10-3, 10-7].

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify LoBiondo in view of Barnes as taught by Canon to indicate to replenishing authority what items need to be replenished.

Regarding claim 12, LoBiondo in view of Barnes does not teach selecting said indicator dependent on a physical state of said supply item. However, Canon teaches selecting said indicator dependent on a physical state of said supply item.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify LoBiondo in view of Barnes as taught by Canon to indicate to replenishing authority what items need to be replenished.

Regarding claim 19, LoBiondo in view of Barnes and Canon teaches:

assigning a serial number to said device [Canon page 10-2];

assigning respective, unique order numbers to different supply items [Canon page 1-2];

allocating order numbers for respectively supply items, permissible for use by said device, to the serial number of said device and storing the allocation at said data center [Barnes, Canon page 1-2];

including said serial number and said ordering number in said communication established from said device to said data center, and encrypting said ordering message (responded to earlier in response to claims 13 – 16 and 18);

upon receipt of said ordering message at said data center, decrypting said ordering message. it is obvious that Barnes decrypts the encrypted message to authenticate the message; and

at said data center after decrypting said ordering message, checking authenticity of said ordering message using said serial number and using at least a part of said ordering number before filling said order. It is a business choice to elect what data to use to authenticate an order. Therefore, LoBiondo in view of Barnes teaches to checking authenticity of said ordering message to determine validity of the order prior to fulfilling the order.

Regarding claim 20, Official notice it taken that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made that it is business choice to elect how to elect ordering numbers.

Therefore, LoBiondo in view of Barnes and Canon teaches selecting said ordering number from the group consisting of ordering codes respectively associated with different supply items and identification numbers respectively associated with different supply items.

Regarding claim 37, LoBiondo in view of Barnes and Canon teaches display connected to said control unit, and wherein said control unit displays a number of remaining imprints on said display each time said device is activated (Canon page 1 – 20). Official notice it taken that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made that it is a design choice to elect what information to display on the display.

Regarding claim 38, LoBiondo in view of Barnes and Canon teaches control unit displays a number of remaining imprints on said display each time said ink source is replaced (Canon page 1 – 20). Official notice it taken that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made that it is a design choice to elect what information to display on the display.

Regarding claim 42, LoBiondo in view of Barnes and Canon teaches a display connected to said control unit, and wherein said control unit displays a message on said display if said ordering message is determined to be non-authentic. Official notice it taken that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made that it is a design choice to elect what information to display on the display.

Conclusion

Applicant is required under 37 CFR '1.111 (c) to consider the references fully when responding to this office action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Naresh Vig whose telephone number is 703.305.3372. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 7:30 - 5:00 (Alt Friday off).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Weiss can be reached on 703.308.2702. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Naresh Vig
Patent Examiner
September 20, 2004